

REMARKS

Applicants gratefully acknowledge the Examiner's statement that claims 17 and 19-21 would be allowed if rewritten in independent form. In response, Applicants have rewritten claims 17 and 19 in independent form and claims 17 and 19-21 are therefore in condition for allowance.

The Examiner has rejected 12-14 as being indefinite under 35 USC 112(2). In addition, the Examiner has rejected the remaining claims under 35 USC 102 as being anticipated by USP 4,143,916 to Trotman, or under 35 USC 103 as being obvious over Trotman in view of 5,399,406 to Matsuo. Applicants respectfully disagree and submit that the pending claims are allowable for the reasons set forth below.

Remarks About the Rejection Under 35 USC 112(2)

Applicants respectfully submit that the recitation of "obround" in claim 12 is clear and definite to one of ordinary skill in the art. In particular, Applicants expressly disclosed in the Specification that the "term 'substantially rectangular' includes *four-sided shapes, even though one or more sides (ends) or corners thereof may rounded*, such that they have a generally obround shape" (Specification at 17, lines 8-11), as shown for example in FIG. 31. Thus, Applicants disclosed that an obround shape has four sides, with one or more ends thereof rounded. Such a definition is clear and definite. Moreover, this definition comports with the dictionary definition of "obround," which is "two semicircles connected by parallel lines" (*see, e.g., www.allwords.com and "How to Say What Stuff Looks Like: A Compendium of Descriptive Terminology," Thomas Rieder, B.A.Sc., P. Eng., 1995*).

Applicants note they have amended claims 9, 12 and 13 to improve the clarity and form thereof by cancelling redundant language.

For at least these reasons, Applicants respectfully submit that the Examiner's rejections under 35 USC 112(2) be withdrawn.

Remarks About Claims 18 and 22:

Claims 18 and 22 recite that the “spaced apart adjacent web structures define substantially X-shaped openings *between said spaced apart adjacent web structures and between said adjacent boss structures* joined thereto when viewed in a direction substantially perpendicular to said support surface.” Similar language is recited, for example, in claim 1 of USP 7,059,682. In contrast, the “X” shaped openings 23 of Trotman, as applied by the Examiner, are merely the *underside of the boss structures 31, 33* as applied by the Examiner (see Trotman at Col. 2, lines 57-58; compare FIGS. 2 and 3, showing a top side and underside of the panel respectively). Clearly the openings 35, which are the only openings in the web structure and between adjacent boss structures, are not “X” shaped or “V” shaped.

Accordingly, claims 18 and 22-24 distinguish over Trotman and should be passed to allowance on the next Office Action.

Claims 1-16:

Independent claims 1, 11 and 15 each recite that each of the “boss structures has a body-facing surface, [and that] said non-planar web structures [extend] away from said body-facing surface of said adjacent boss structures and [forms] a hinge structure between adjacent boss structures, with said body-facing surface being more proximal to an occupant than said web structures when the occupant is supported by the seat structure.” As admitted by the Examiner, Trotman does not disclose or suggest “a plurality of web structures that are non-planar” (Office Action at 5), let alone non-planar structures extending away from the body-facing support of the boss structures. Applicants further point out that, in the embodiments of FIGS. 1-5 and 7 in Trotman, the boss structures 23, 33 extend away from the occupant, with the web structures 36, 37 being more proximal the user than any body facing surface of the boss structures. In the embodiment of FIG. 6, the lower panel 52 has boss structures extending upwardly, but with a flat or planar web structure 36.

Applicants further submit that the rib sections 7 of Matsuo, applied as the web structures by the Examiner, extend *toward* any body-facing surface of adjacent boss structure 3, not away therefrom as recited in the claims (see Matsuo at FIG. 5 (the rib section 7

“protrudes in the same direction as the protrusion 3.” Matsuo at Col. 3, lines 17-18)). In addition, there is no suggestion, motivation, or any other reason to try and reorient the rib sections 7, since the structure is secured to a flat base section 2 (Matsuo at FIG. 1). Indeed, if the rib sections 7 were to intrude into the planar section of the base, the panel could not support other panels and be secured to them with adhesive bonding (*see* Matsuo at Col. 3, lines 48-58). Moreover, Matsuo expressly states that “because all of the protrusion sections 3 and all the rib sections 7 are protruding in the same direction from the base section 2, the paneling material 1 can be manufactured easily by such forming method as superplastic forming” (Matsuo at Col. 3, lines 43-47). While Matsuo also discloses that the protrusions 3 (applied as the boss structures) and ribs 7 could protrude out in both directions by way of a composite structure (Col. 5, lines 26-42), there is no disclosure or suggestion that corresponding ribs adjacent respective protrusions would extend in an opposite direction. Indeed, as set forth above, Matsuo teaches against such a configuration.

Moreover, the ribs 7 of Matsuo are expressly provided to stiffen and reinforce the material between the protrusions 3 so as to “increase the rigidity of the base section,” which is exactly opposite of the recited “hinge structure” of the pending claims.


For all of these reasons, claims 1-16 distinguish over Trotman and Matsuo.

CONCLUSION

No amendment in inventorship is necessitated by this Response. Applicants have authorized payment for two additional claims, including two additional independent claims. Please direct any questions about this amendment and response to the undersigned attorney at (312) 321-4713.

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Respectfully submitted,



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